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A RECORD OF THE ORNATE HAWK-EAGLE (*SPIZAETUS ORNATUS*) IN NAYARIT, MEXICO

Ornate Hawk-Eagles (*Spizaetus ornatus*) inhabit tropical and subtropical zones, in well-preserved interior forests, from sea level to 1500 m. Habitat associations include tropical rainforests and deciduous forests, cloud forests, and occasionally pine-oak (*Pinus-Quercus*) forests (Iñigo-Elías et al. 1987, *Condor* 89:671–672; Iñigo-Elías 2000, pages 122–124 in G. Ceballos and L. Márquez Valdelamar [Eds.], *Las Aves de México en Peligro de Extinción*. CONABIO-UNAM-Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico). However, this species also has been recorded from old second-growth and coffee plantations with native trees providing canopy cover. Ornate Hawk-Eagles have been documented from southern Mexico to Colombia and Ecuador (Iñigo-Elías 2000). In Mexico, they have been recorded on the slope of the Gulf of Mexico, from Tamaulipas and San Luis Potosi to Chiapas and the Yucatan Peninsula (Fig. 1). On the Pacific slope they have been recorded in the state of Colima and Jalisco, with an isolated record from Guerrero (Iñigo-Elías 2000). Ornate Hawk-Eagles have always been considered uncommon to rare, with low reproductive potential, producing one offspring every 2 yr (Iñigo-Elías 2000). Habitat requirements, low productivity, and low abundance make them highly vulnerable to extinction (Ferguson-Lees and Christie 2001, *Raptors of the world*. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, NY U.S.A.).

During a mammal survey of the southwestern portion of the state of Nayarit, Mexico, we observed and photographed an Ornate Hawk-Eagle on 22 February 2003, at 1300 H soaring at a low altitude not more than 100 m above the canopy, constantly calling. The locality was 105°13'W and 21°41'N, elevation 212 m; southwest of the community named "El Cora," within the municipality of San Blas, Nayarit. The eagle perched first on a torote tree (*Bursera* sp.) and moved to an unidentified snag 10 min after it was first observed perched; the height of both trees was >20 m. The habitat is a semi-evergreen rainforest, with an abundant source of water from a nearby river. The site is within a single 225-km² patch of semi-evergreen forest (Palacio-Prieto et al. 2000, *Invest. Geogr. Bolet. Instit. Geogr. UNAM* 43: 183–203), apparently protected from development. We estimated the age of the observed individual to be transitional,

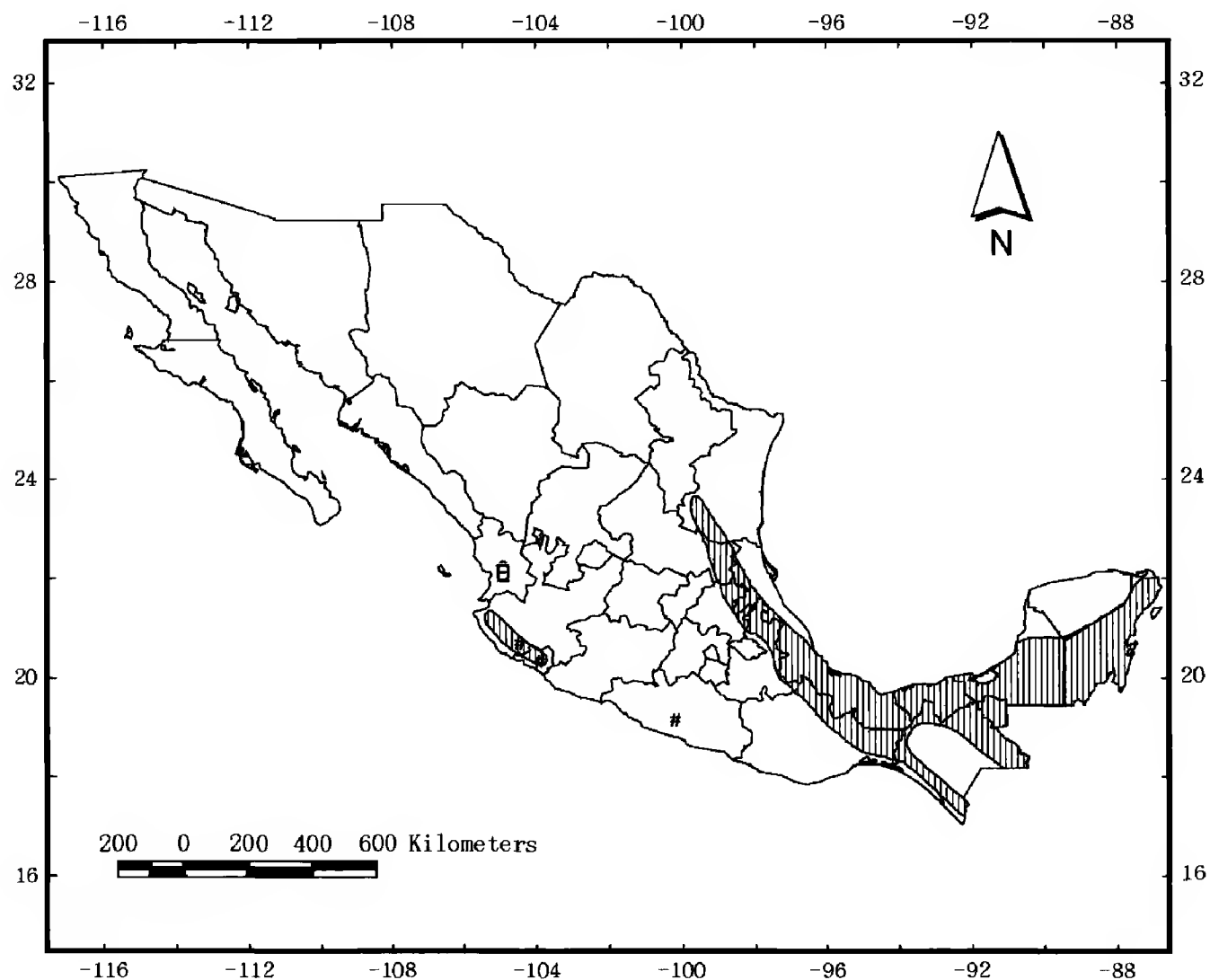


Figure 1. Distribution range for Ornate Hawk-Eagle, modified from Iñigo-Elías (2000) and Howell and Webb (1995). The star shows the Nayarit record, black circles are verified records.

between 2- and 3-yr-old, but not yet a mature adult (González García and Iñigo-Elías pers. comm.). Distinct characters for identification were the plumage, the barred legs, and flight pattern (Iñigo-Elías 2000). The nearest verified records for the Ornate Hawk-Eagle are located in Sierra Autlán, Jalisco (Schaldach 1969, *An. Inst. Biol. UNAM* 40:299–316) and the town of Pueblo Juárez, Colima (Schaldach 1963, *Proc. West. Found. Vertebr. Zool.* 1:1–100), located 200 and 280 km, respectively, from our sighting. Several authors (Iñigo-Elías 2000, Howell and Webb 1995, *A guide to the birds of Mexico and northern Central America*, Oxford Univ. Press, London, U.K.) delineate the Pacific slope range of Ornate Hawk-Eagle into Jalisco, based on one verified record in the southern portion of Jalisco.

At least one hawk-eagle, the Javan Hawk-Eagle (*Spizaetus bartelsi*), apparently shows long-distance dispersal capability between patches of suitable habitat (>37 km; S. van Balen, V. Nijman, and H.H.T. Prins 2000, *Biol. Cons.* 96:297–304). Even if these movements are typical of the genus *Spizaetus*, our record is disjunct from other reported sightings, which probably indicates that the observed hawk-eagle came from the nearest population in Jalisco. Ornate Hawk-Eagle territories may include 13.75 km² in the tropical rainforest of Guyana (Thiollay 1989, *Cons. Biol.* 3:128–137). If our record was a hawk-eagle from the Jalisco population it would have traveled ca. 54 home-range diameters.

This observation increases the known range of the Ornate Hawk-Eagle and emphasizes the lack of biological data for most of the mountain ranges in the western Pacific slope of Mexico. We strongly recommend initiating surveys for Ornate Hawk-Eagles and other raptors in the mountains between our sighting record and the known Jalisco population.

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